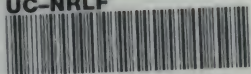


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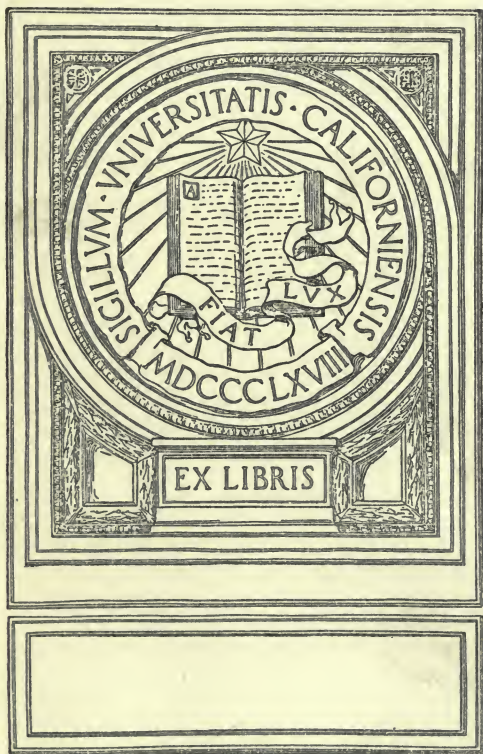
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Poems

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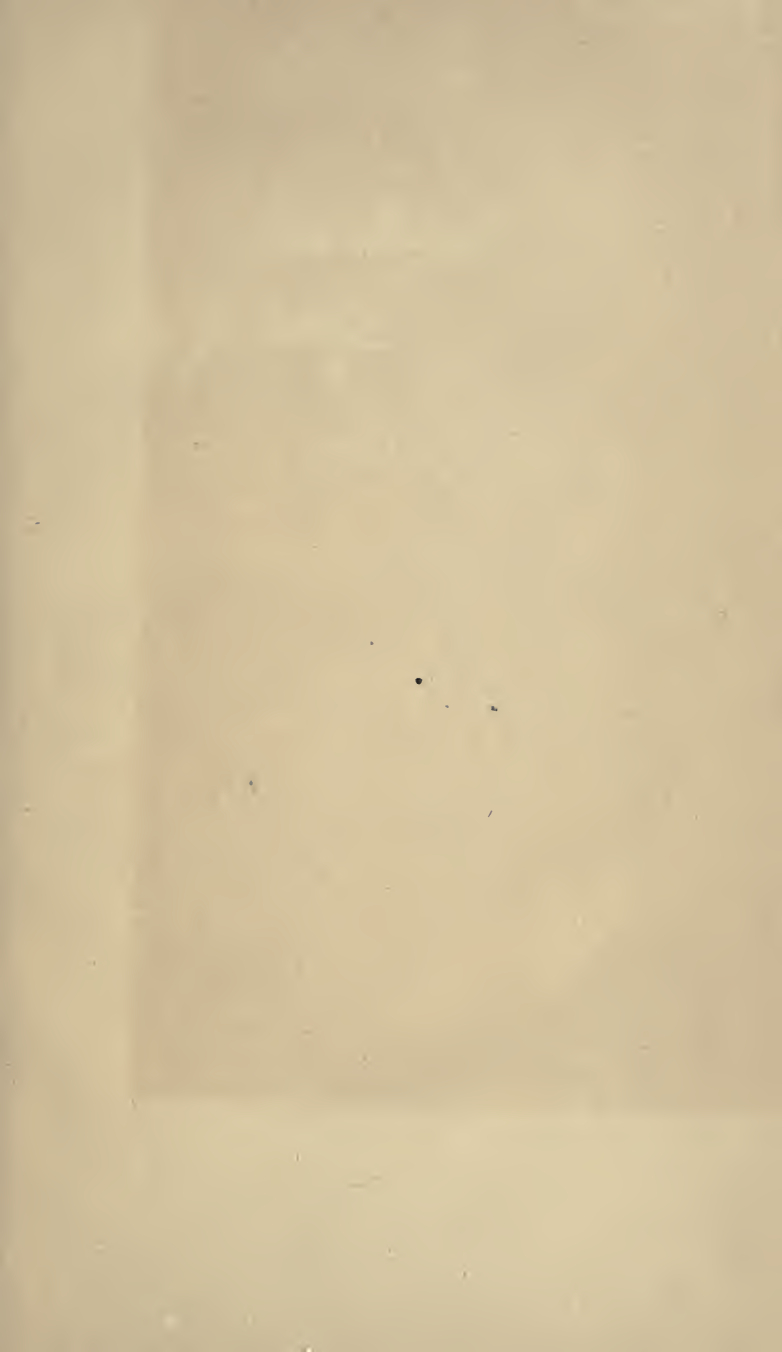
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by
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P O E M S.

THE BROOK.

SOMEWHERE there is a sea;
I near it, every turn ;
But where its waters be
I cannot stop to learn.

So, through the sylvan scene,
I murmur as I go ;
I keep the mosses green,
And help the lilies blow.

The rushes made a net
They thought I could not pass,
With sticks and mosses set,
And woven in with grass.

I passed them one by one ;
They guessed not my intent ;
It was so slyly done,
I tittered as I went.

THE THRUSH.

I sing from spray to spray,
I love my little mate ;
And if the buds delay
I only have to wait ;

For rain is sure to fall
To nourish grass and bush,
And God, who thinks of all,
Will not forget the thrush.

So I have nought to do
But just to build my nest,
And, all the season through,
To work and sing my best ;

To feed my callow young;
To skip from spray to spray,
And laugh, the boughs among,
My happy life away.

IN THE MORNING.

Is it the voice of a flute that calls from the neighboring
orchard?

No, not a flute, but the mellower song of the red-
breasted robin.

Is it a fairy's hand that shakes from the cherry its petals?

No, not a fairy's touch, but the wind moving softly
among them.

Is it a woven veil that softens the green of the valley?

No, not a work of the loom, but a mist exhaled from the
meadows.

Is it the buckler of Mars that is lifted over the moun-
tains?

No, not the shield of a god, but the sun on the eastern
horizon.

Spring is the bountiful giver of blooms to the garden
and forest;

Beautiful morning fills them with sweetness and hangs
them with dew-drops:—

55

Spring, the laughing-eyed queen of delight, and morning,
her handmaid,

Braiding her tresses with pearls, and showering odors
upon her.

Lo, through the delicate purple and white of the blossoming orchard,

Shadows of elms on its roof, the house with the breezy
verandah,

Draped in the tender green of the glossy Virginia
creeper!

Brightly the fountain before it leaps up and breaks in
the sunshine.

See! a lady in white trips lightly into the garden,

Stoops at a box-trimmed bed to gather a pansy and
moss-pink,

Plucks a spray from the sweet arbor-vitæ, and buries
them in it.

Then she pauses a moment, to list to the song of the
robin.

Yonder the tulip exults in the splendor of orange and
scarlet;

Queens it in purple, the iris, amid the drawn swords of
her guardsmen ;

Blushes the almond, an Eve without a green leaf to
enrobe her.

Ah ! a cinnamon rose has a bud newly pointed with
crimson.

Happy rose-bud, permitted to die in the lace of her
bosom.

See, on the garden-gate, a lily with dew on its petals !

No, not a flower, but her hand lit up with the flash of a
jewel.

See ! a tassel of gold gleams under the edge of her
bonnet.

No, not a tissue of gold, but one of her beautiful tresses.

See ! how the grasses nod, and the landscape heaves in
the distance !

No, it is I that am stirred as she answers the note of
the robin.

Bird of the beautiful voice ! I want you to sing in my
parlor ;

Lily, white queen of the morning ! I must have you to
bloom in my garden.

Y O U .

A PLEASANT vale, with cedar trees
Through which the five-leaved ivy peeps ;
Behind, a pool in shadow sleeps ;
In front, an outlook to the seas ;
A sober brook 'twixt sea and pond ;
A singing bird on every brier ;
The outlines of a village spire
Against the rose and blue beyond.

MY BOOK.

I LOOKED along a scholar's shelf,
 And chose a book, not knowing why ;—
 Perhaps the binding pleased my eye,
 Perhaps it drew my inner self. .
 I turned the leaves with eager hand
 And read on each fresh page of it
 Legends of wisdom and of wit,
 Too deep for me to understand.
 Still over each vignette I hang
 And strive to make the meaning clear ;—
 As well translate the solar year,
 Or score the song the syrens sang !
 You are that book,—and as for me,
 I like my sweet perplexity.

THE PLANK.

HERE is the plank where I have knelt to see
The minims dart, and spotted turtles creep.
One day a little maiden played with me :
The narrow brook for us became broad ocean,
And rocks, the fallen tree, the mossy bank,
Were London, Paris, India, or Peru ;
Our ships, the last year's leaves and acorn cups,
Peopled the sea,—now sober merchantmen
Rich in imaginary gold and spice,
Or proud armadas threatening mimic war.
Now Cleopatra's barge of state went by,
With butter-cups for golden prow and stern,
And purple canvas from the blue-flag's loom.

Innocent joy o'erlives the winter's frost.
It cannot die, but perfects flower on flower
In memory's garden, and our thoughts hang round it
Like humming birds about the blossomed bean.
The gem-like beauty of that summer day
Life's common waters never can dissolve.
It was a life itself,—with eager youth,
A busy manhood, and a sad old-age ;
For when we parted, as the sun went down,
The hand of age seemed laid upon our hearts.
We said that we would always play together,
And serious eyes made promises of love.
Alas ! she, now a thriving farmer's wife,
With ruddy, white-haired, shouting boys and girls,
Bears lightly on her heart that broken vow !

THE SEARCH.

UP and down I go, but cannot find you
Whom my heart is ever calling after,
Whom my hopes are ever prophesying.
I have heard the flutter of a garment,
I have caught the flash of sunny tresses,
And so wondered if you were not near me.
I have traced a footstep in the spring-time,
By the violets and dainty mosses
Seeming fresher, sweeter for its passing;—
Could a step but yours have made them sweeter?
I have heard a voice as soft as silence,
Voice so soft I ceased to think in answer,
Yet so far and faint, I was uncertain
Whether stars did wink or you were speaking.

Let me hear, O, woman I am seeking!
O, my perfect self, my soul, my other!
Let me hear again your voice or footfall,
Certain that it is your voice or footfall!

Can it be, I have forgot the token
Which you gave by that celestial river,
Where we parted with the dissonant sorrow
Of a silver harp-string strained to breaking,
When I thought you lost to me forever,
And you said, "By this, Love, you shall know me"?
No, I cannot fail to know the token,
For it is the sunshine, music, perfume,
Is the goal, and purpose of my being.

So I study voices, motions, faces,
Seeking for the symbol of your presence,
Sometimes thinking I at last have found you,
Look again, and miss the gracious emblem.
So I read the lives of noble women,
Warm my heart with words that they have spoken,
Let it beat the rhythm of their poems;
Thinking you, perhaps, have been before me

And in deeds or music left a message,
As a maiden drops, in field or garden,
For her lover, pledges of remembrance
Seen by him, unseen of every other.

But not any deeds nor any poems
Bear that mystic seal upon their foreheads,
Breathe that homelike tenderness of cadence.
Yet my soul keeps young, and faith is perfect;
For I know that I at last must find you,—
By the virtue of your parting promise,
By the earnest of my secret longing,
Find you sometime,—possibly to morrow,—
Find you, clasp you, be again a circle.

BLIGHT.



THAT dream is over, then,
Never to return again.
My flowers, I understand,
Were planted in the sand ;
For the bud to earth did shrink
Without showing any pink.

He has locked our private door,
I cannot enter any more.
Listening at the key-hole, I
Try to hear him walking by ;
But I cannot catch his tread,
So I know that he is dead.

A Y E A R

“FAREWELL, my love, for I must go
Down where the fragrant tropics blow.”
The flowers were nodding on hill and lea.

“Before again the harvests shine,
Thy little hand shall sleep in mine.”
The ship was swinging upon the sea.

The sailor kissed the maiden’s lip,
And spread the white sails of his ship.
The ship was flying upon the sea.

The maiden watched it from the shore
Till darkness shut his sable door.
The flowers were sleeping on hill and lea.

And then she sought her mother’s side,
Nor strove the willful tear to hide.
The flowers were weeping on hill and lea.

The south wind died ; the north wind blew,
And white and cold the season grew.
The ship was tossing upon the sea.

The spring came gayly up the south
With buds in hair and song in mouth.
The flowers were waking on hill and lea.

Her thoughts were like the poet's lark
That soars and chides away the dark.
The ship was dancing upon the sea.

The harvest moon, a silver line,
Just in the west began to shine.
The flowers were nodding on hill and lea.

A broad, dark hand embraced her own,
And thought put on an undertone.
The ship was swinging upon the sea.

A U R E V O I R .

So soon are you going, then ?

Not an hour since, we met—

Still the farmer and his men

Find the grass they're mowing, wet ;

Birds are just in perfect song,

Told is not the half their story,—

Not a rose hath suffered wrong,

Shut is not one morning-glory.

When I took your fresh warm hand,

You would stay, I thought, until

Evening fell ; and there you stand

With your foot upon the sill.

I have called the horses out,
I have ready hook and line ;
I had hoped to hear your shout
Mingled in the hunt with mine.

You will go ? A little while,
I may have a call your way ;
Arm in arm we'll cross the stile—
So you think you cannot stay ?

Then good-bye ! For me, I hold,
One hour's worth your coming for :
So whate'er remains untold
We'll remember—*Au revoir !*

ENDYMION.

THROUGH forest-paths, dim-lighted by the dawn,
And over open pastures without trail,
A maiden walked with morning on the hills.
Upon a level, where the rapid slope
Paused as it were to take a bolder leap,
A brotherhood of oaks had pitched their tents
Behind a palisade of blueberry bushes,
Masked by the spotted lily and sweet-fern.
The one small cedar wore a hunter's cap,
And lower down, a mottled powder-horn.

As at the ominous hat amid the corn
The feathered thieves at timorous distance cower,
But, bolder grown, in narrower circles wheel,
Then perch a-top, and from their bubbling throats
Pour mocking songs of triumph—so the maid.
A war of roses raged along her cheek,
And now the red prevailed, and now the white.

At length, on tip-toe, with adventurous hand
She put aside the branches, and beheld,
Shut in the leafy cave, a youth asleep—
The brow in half-eclipse of random hair,
The eyes wide arched, full cheeks of swarthy red,
A silken shade on tender lips, hands brown
With sport, strength ambushed in each shapely limb.

She stood like one who finds by chance a pearl,
And guesses at its worth, and by that charm
Builds out his future into fairy-land.
Her new-fledged fear took wings. She touched his cheek ;
She raised his curls, and left a temple bare ;
She watched the throbbing pulses of the throat ;
Then plaited a thin wreath of evergreen,
With two or three wild-rose buds, for his head,
Delaying long enough to see him stir,
And open wide, astonished eyes,—then fled
By rock and barberry-bush and laughing stream,
Pursued by rapid feet and golden words,
Thrown like Hesperian fruit to charm her speed,—
“Stay, beauteous dream!”—until he caught her hand.

THE UNKNOWN FRIEND.

OH, friend unknown ! I faint to think
Of all your goodness unto me ;
Though poor I am, you do not shrink
To give me your society.

You weave for me my robe of friends,
Withhold from sin, give me the praise ;
And, where one path of beauty ends,
You open new a hundred ways.

I know no feature of your face,
I know not if you think or see ;—
Only that showers of good and grace
Descend from some near heaven on me.

And though I cannot see the hand
That plies the gorgeous loom of morn,
And strive in vain to understand
The simple science of the corn ;

And though the face is never shown,
Whose smiles I feel in kiss or rod ;
The name you give yourself, unknown—
I make a name, and call you God.

BY THE DEAD.

A WAXEN candle, on a candlestick,
Gave light to all the house; a sudden wind
Extinguished it, and all the house is dark.

I looked into the parlor as I passed,
And saw the brow's upturned serenity,
And the brave figure through the drapery.
I whispered in myself, "It is a statue!
"The artist-soul has just now left his labor;
"He did not drudge till he had spoiled his work,
"But dropped his chisel at the perfect minute!"

Was that a sigh that shivered through the hall,
And fainted with its weight of utter grief?
Last week it would have wrung his heart to hear,
And knit his arms around his mother's neck.

He heeds it not, undutiful dead son !
Oh, fatal love ! that so enforceth grief,
Child of the heart and nurtured tenderly,
Taught all its weaknesses but to betray,
Armed with its subtlest lightnings but to blast !

Is that a footfall, soft upon the stair ?
Still soft, but sharper, on the marble floor ?
And next, the faintest friction of a hinge ?
I could not see the father with the dead.
Perhaps he lifts the covering from the face,
And looks upon the features, without tears.
Perhaps he tries to make it seem a dream,
Or tries to wake himself as from a dream.
Who knows what fathers do in such a case ?

Your eyes, O friend, still look the way you went.
I think that there was gladness when you came,
And hurrying to and fro to welcome you,
And claspings of the hand, and some surprise.
I hold that you did well, for there is room

For your great soul to stretch its perfect height.
And while we eat the fruits that we call truth,
Poor shrivelled figs at corners of the streets,
You pluck them fresh from fair, immortal trees.

STUDIES.

I.

THE dogwood blossoms, white and tipped with pearl,
Show where the bobolink, most versatile
Musician, spins his many-colored song.
The thrush's whistle makes the cedar-tree
A fount of silver sweetness. On the edge
Of the ravine the robin plays his pipe,
And in the alder cloisters, deeper down,
Near neighbor to the brook, the cat-bird calls.
O, happy-souled inhabitants of spring !
I thank you for your hospitable songs.
Fain would I fit my music to your key,
And art's complex perfections interfuse
With your severe simplicity, my faith
Enlarge and strengthen with your confidence.

II.

THE long, dark waves are hurrying down the bay,
Inspired, as with a purpose, by the wind :
Their snowy banners gleam and disappear,
And they, exultant, leap upon the shore,
White with the flash, loud with the clash of arms.
Beyond, low hills, by distance hushed, stretch out
In timid green and gentle undulation ;
But here a voice calls out of every tree,
And voiceless herbs make shift to talk by signs.

Across a sea unmeasured, from a shore
Unknown, a force streams through me like the wind.
It strikes the chorded prelude of a song
Amid my piny branches, and low down
Stirs humbler feelings, common sympathies—
Trivial grasses, ferns, and violets.

III.

A MIST was driving down the southern slopes,
And stretched away along the distant hills,
White, thin, like the ambiguous light of dreams.

A rock, with mosses freshened by the rain,
Made offer of a seat beside the shore ;
And at its base the reflux tide had left
A footstool,—reeds and broken shells. O'erhead,
The dogwood's silken involucre drooped ;
Behind, the blueberry hung its fairy bells
Along a bank of variegated clay,
Quaintly engraven by slow-trickling streams.
Here, in a thicket, oaks about their stems
Drew close their leaves, half-grown and rosy-edged,
The black birch rustled in its flexile plumes,
The black haw trimmed its small bouquets between ;
Low at their feet the skeleton fern unrolled,
And swung mist-jewelled locks of maiden-hair.
There, cedars builded high cathedral towers,
And woodbines, stealing through the corridors,
Reached purple fingers out to catch the rain,
Like children 'neath the showery eaves of June.

I heard the wind loud in the dripping oaks,
And watched the turbid waters of the bay
In yellow ripples creeping from the shore ;

But not a thought of sorrow or despair
Stole cuckoo-like into my nest of joy.
No sound of lamentation smote my ear,
No weak complaint for sunshine long delayed,
No sentimental sigh. But everywhere,
A vigorous patience and serene content;
A calm reliance on the eternal laws
That work by alternation to one end;
A subtle science, which transmutes for use
The useless, and surprises into grace
The partial and deformed.

A DEDICATION.

I HAVE known you long, dear lady, yet we seem
acquainted newly,

For each moment makes disclosure of some charm
before unseen ;

You are a fair garden to me, nobly planned and tended
duly,—

Here the red-rose, there the white-rose, and the lark-
spur blue between.

Yet, when nature spells her lessons, you are wont to
pause and heed her ;

You, with all your subtle culture, find her common
words divine ;

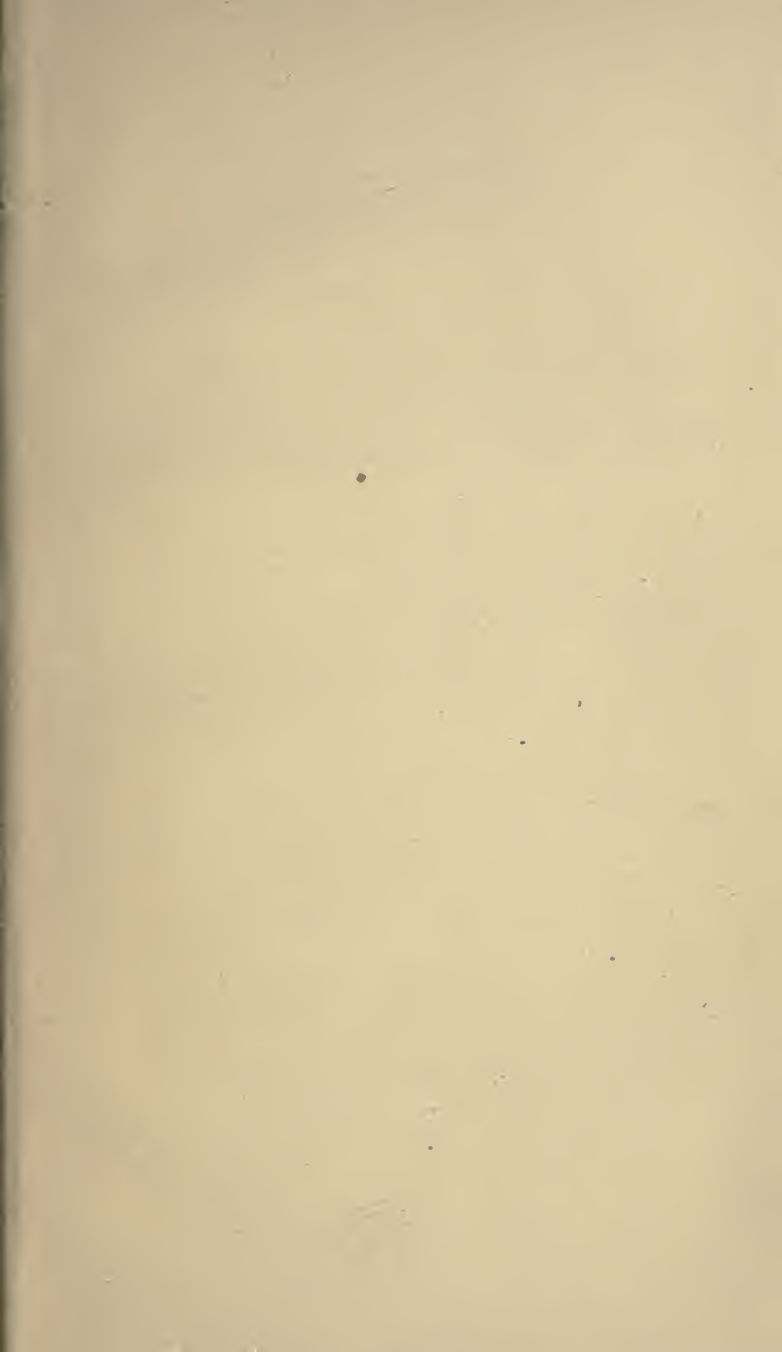
So I gather in the forest the blue berries of the cedar,
Sumac, ferns, and mosses for you, with a fragrant
spray of pine.

There are those who sing you nobler, sweeter songs than
I can sing you,

Who can twine you gracious garlands that surpass my
faltering skill ;

Yet I pray you take my failure, take the wreath I dare
to bring you,—

Seem, at least, to like it, Lady, for the motive and the
will.



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